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Klinger to retire after 44 dynamic years

Summary: Professor Klinger's career has touched countless people--students, faculty, staff, fellow psychology colleagues, and the field of psychology itself--in Morris, in Minnesota and around the world.

(April 28, 2006)-At the end of the academic year, Eric Klinger, professor of psychology, will retire from the University of Minnesota, Morris. His career has touched countless people--students, faculty, staff, fellow psychology colleagues, and the field of psychology itself--in Morris, in Minnesota, and around the world.

"Professor Eric Klinger is surely one of the most distinguished members of UMM's faculty over the campus' 46-year life," stated Sam Schuman, chancellor. "A stimulating and demanding teacher and a productive and serious scholar, he will long be remembered as emblematic of UMM's finest."

Psychology at the new campus on the prairie

"Rod Briggs was one of the world's best salespeople," remembered Klinger. In 1962, UMM wasn't even on Klinger's radar when he was teaching at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. But Briggs, UMM's first chief administrator, sought him out and shared his vision of a "little campus out on the prairie with great faculty, great students, and great facilities." Although they both knew it wasn't true-yet-Klinger was intrigued. He was very attracted to the idea of a campus entirely focused on undergraduate education.

Before he made his decision, Klinger called two people—Fred Peterson, professor of art history, and Stephen Granger, assistant to the dean, both now retired. Peterson was a college friend of Klinger's wife, Karla, and Granger, also a psychologist, had been teaching introductory psychology courses with Iver Bogen, director of counseling. "Fred and Steve confirmed Rod's vision," recalled Klinger, and he accepted the position as UMM's first full-time faculty in psychology.

When he arrived in Morris in 1962, there was much to be done, much to be decided. Barely finished unpacking, Klinger set off to recruit a second faculty member for the discipline, Bruce Dunn. "There was much enthusiasm about making something of this campus," remembered Klinger about his first years at UMM, "but there was also uncertainty whether the campus would make it. Even the regents were not too sure." But the faculty was talented, energetic, and excited, although young—many still finishing graduate school. And the college received tremendous support from the Morris community, especially families such as the LaFaves and Morrisons, remembered Klinger. In the fall of 1966, UMM successfully reached its first milestone—1,000-students enrolled, only six years after UMM opened its doors. Questions surrounding UMM's permanence began to fade.

Teaching on two campuses: Morris and Twin Cities

Klinger served as the coordinator of the psychology discipline throughout his career. He's taught a variety of courses including Psychopathology, Personality, and Professional Ethics in the Human Services. His fields of specialization include personality and clinical psychology, especially influences of motivation and emotion on cognition, including

daydreaming and night dreaming, motivational theory, and applications to treatment of depression and alcoholism.

Lonnie Bradford '05, a doctorate in clinical psychology student at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio, was a student in many of Klinger's courses. He recalled an interesting experience: "After a harrowing Greyhound bus ride across country, I had arrived in Indiana for a graduate school interview. I made my way down the hall rehearsing what I would say. As I arrived at the office door, I was halted by a large poster covered in citations for 'Klinger.' It turned out my interviewer's interests were in alcohol use and motivation. Needless to say, we had much to talk about. He was a Klinger fan."

"Knowing Eric and being taught by him has been a real pleasure," shared Bradford. "As a professor he is exceptional, always testing his students knowledge to the brink, and at the same time challenging them to think beyond the coursework. It is my hope that I will eventually come to understand and appreciate psychology to the same degree."

In addition to teaching and research on the Morris campus, Klinger has been a full member of the Graduate Faculty of the University of Minnesota since 1978, when he began to teach and advise Twin Cities psychology doctoral students. First traveling by bus and later by shuttle service, Klinger spent many hours on the highway in order to fulfill his dual appointment. The demanding schedule resulted in much professional satisfaction. "I found this arrangement to be very rewarding and absolutely useful for our UMM students, providing tremendous opportunities for me and for my students," stated Klinger. He's been gradually phasing out graduate school responsibilities and is currently overseeing one final graduate student dissertation.

Research: fantasy, daydreaming, imagery

Klinger's academic life has been rich and full with ground breaking research projects, often collaborations with other psychologists and frequently with students. His many research projects, in some fashion or form, all stem from what he describes as a "flop," his own doctorate dissertation. Using Association of American Medical Colleges data, then his employer, he hoped to use personality assessments to determine which medical school applicants would do well in school and become good physicians. The information gathered provided little revelation, but the measures in which the data were gathered piqued Klinger's inquisitiveness. Interestingly, he noted that in some cases fantasy-based measures such as inkblots and storytelling tests were far better indicators than question and answer inventories. As Klinger writes in *Daydreaming* from that moment forward, "He was hooked." Throughout his 50-year career, numerous innovative inquiries into human imaginings evolved from that one "flop." He stated: "It has been a long journey, but my research has been extremely important to me."

During the 1970s and 1980s, Klinger's research involved developing new methods of thought sampling that "made quite a splash" on the research scene. He published his first book, *Structure and Functions of Fantasy*, in 1971. *Meaning and Void*, published in 1977, focused on how one's inner thoughts and feelings are influenced by commitment to goals. That investigation led to collaboration with Miles Cox, currently professor of the psychology of addictive behaviours at the University of Wales. Their partnership explores connections between addictions, motivation, and emotion. *Imagery*, published in 1981, shares his study of mental imagery as it relates to behavioral change. *Daydreaming*, published in 1990, was written in nonscientific, plain language making Klinger's fantasy and daydreaming research accessible to all readers. Most recently, he and Cox edited and wrote large parts of a *Handbook of Motivational Counseling*, published in 2004, a comprehensive handbook that showcases the methods of motivational assessment and counseling techniques that originated at UMM.

Klinger's research and subsequent writing have been supported by numerous major grants from agencies such as the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, the National Science Foundation, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism and the National Institute of Mental Health.

Studying, teaching and serving in Germany

In 1975, Klinger received a Senior Research Fulbright Fellowship to study and teach at Ruhr University of Bochum,

Germany. The educational fellowship served not only as a major professional opportunity but also as a link, a reconnection, to his childhood. Until the age of five, Klinger lived with his parents in Vienna, Austria. In 1938, Jewish ancestry impelled his parents' decision to flee that country. Bureaucracy forced the family to live apart for several years—father in the United States, and mother and son in Australia waiting for approval to join him. In 1943, Klinger and his mother boarded a Swedish freighter to Los Angeles, and from there, transcontinental trains to Bridgeport, Connecticut, where the family established their home.

From that time until leaving home at the age of 17, Klinger spoke German every day. When he arrived in Germany in 1975, that childhood “domestic language” had gone unused for twenty-five years, but six weeks later, Klinger gave his first public talk—in German. The words from his youth, combined with intense language study specific to his field, laid the foundation for fluency in his revived native language. Daily, he continues to read from books, newspapers or journals in German.

The fellowship also established lifelong relationships to psychology scholars in Germany. He spent a quarter at the University of Gottingen, West Germany, in 1981 and taught full-time in Bochum during 1983-84. After that immersion, he began to “pass” as a German native speaker. As a representative of the international scientific community, Klinger served 12 years, from 1985-1997, on the advisory council of the Max Planck Institute for Psychological Research located in Munich. His personal friend and colleague, Dr. Heinz Heckhausen, helped found the research center.

Award-winning teacher and scholar

Klinger is the recipient of the Horace T. Morse Award, the Outstanding Teacher of Undergraduate Psychology Award, the UMM Faculty Research Award and the international Society for Personality and Social Psychology's prestigious Henry A. Murray Award. He has published more than 125 scientific publications and served as an associate editor of the *Encyclopedia of Psychology*, published by the Oxford University Press and American Psychological Association. He received a doctor of philosophy in psychology from the University of Chicago and an artium baccalaureus degree in social relations from Harvard University.

Morris will continue to be “home base” for Klinger and wife Karla. While travel is in their plans, Klinger also hopes to remain a presence on campus, working with students, conducting research and writing. He shares: “I’m thinking of retirement as a sabbatical of indefinite duration.”

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.